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MEDIA ADVISORY

Veterans Cemetery announces \$4.9 million renovation project

Expansion project to include headstone supports, landscape improvement

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KILLEEN, Texas — Honoring the men and women who served in our nation's military is the focus of the most ambitious renovation project in the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery's 10-year history.

Scheduled to begin in February, a \$4.9 million expansion project will involve the installation of concrete support sleeves for existing and future headstones, the addition of 4,000 new burial crypts, and the replacement of capstones on the columbaria.

Resodding the turf, planting new landscape features such as bushes and trees, dedicating a special area for scattering of ashes, and repaving the surface of the memorial walkway are also in the plans for the estimated year-long project, funded by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

"This isn't only an aesthetic improvement project," said Eric Brown, director of State Veterans Cemeteries for the Texas Veterans Land Board. "Our main goal is for this cemetery to stand the test of time. We're working hard to ensure that future generations may come here and continue the tradition of honoring those who served our country."

Located on a gently rolling hillscape in Killeen, the headstones often require straightening and additional sod for support. The concrete sleeves will keep the headstones from shifting or tipping, Brown said.

Columbaria (small buildings where ashes and remains are kept) will undergo repairs to the capstones atop each unit. This will all be done without accessing the interred remains — only the capstones will be removed.

"A few months is a small portion of time to make these resting places lasting memorials for generations to come," Brown added. "We want to stress that in no way will the remains of our heroes be moved or even touched."

Honor is hard at work at the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Killeen. The cemetery is located on 174 acres previously part of Fort Hood and donated by the federal government. The construction of the cemetery was made possible through the

coordination of area veterans groups, the city of Killeen, the federal government, and the VLB.

The initial phase of development included 7,620 gravesites on 31 acres. The cemetery will eventually be capable of providing a final resting place to more than 50,000 veterans and their family members.

WHO: Texas VLB, the VA, and staff of the Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery

WHAT: \$4.9 million renovation and expansion project

WHEN: February through November 2014 (estimated time)

WHERE: Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery in Killeen

WHY: To make sure memorials for Texas' heroes are preserved for generations

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